



## Voyage of the *Sesostris*: Elihi Vedder in Egypt\*

by Hugh T. Broadley



Fig. 1. Elihu Vedder, *Egyptian Landscape*, 1891, oil on panel, 10x20", Phoenix Art Museum. Accession number 65/56.

*Egyptian Landscape* (Fig. 1), a small painting by Elihu Vedder (1836-1923) in the Phoenix Art Museum,<sup>1</sup> is a product of a trip to Egypt made by the artist in the winter of 1889-90. The picture has never been satisfactorily identified, and of the trip itself virtually nothing is known except for a few nostalgic observations which the artist included in his book *The Digressions of V* published two decades later.<sup>2</sup>

A potential remedy in both instances has recently become possible through the chance discovery of a cache of documents,<sup>3</sup> which includes a journal kept by Vedder during his trip, a large quantity of letters written to his wife Car-

rie, and an equally large number of letters which Carrie wrote to him. The quantity of all relevant documents is such as to preclude publishing them *in toto*. Instead, through a process of selection and editing it is the aim of this paper to create a sense of the trip and to suggest something of the effect it had upon him and his attitudes during this mature period of his life. Further, a more specific identification of the Phoenix Art Museum's picture will be proposed on the basis of those documents.

There can be no question of Egypt's having held an appeal for Vedder since his youth. *The Questioner of the Sphinx*,<sup>4</sup> undoubtedly his most famous Egyptian



picture, was painted when he was only twenty-five, more than two decades before he was to see the real Sphinx face to face. There is nothing, though, to suggest that Vedder ever dreamed of visiting Egypt. Indeed, he was caught completely by surprise when the opportunity to do so presented itself.

In mid-September, 1889, the Vedders returned to their home in Rome after visiting the Exposition Universelle in Paris where long lines of other tourists discouraged them from ascending the Eiffel Tower; and upon their arrival found a letter written on behalf of Rhode Island industrialist George F. Corliss inviting Vedder to accompany him to Egypt.

Carrie Vedder's reaction was more distressful than enthusiastic. She wrote immediately to her mother in Boston:

"Among the letters awaiting us was one inviting Vedder to go up the Nile, his expenses from the last of October until some time in March paid on a dahabeeah. I fear it is another case of the longed for come too late. Had we only known this Spring perhaps it might have been managed but now—my brain is in too much of a whirl to think . . . ."<sup>5</sup>

The anxieties of Carrie Vedder, financial agent and gallery manager as well as wife and mother, had an economic basis and were quickly communicated to friends and acquaintances. Bessie (Mrs. Frank) Benedict, who had extended Corliss's invitation, responded:

"Thanks so much for your candor—*entre femmes* we can speak plainly then. Don't let me be the means of disturbing your very necessary calculations—I should never forgive myself . . . . If Mr. Vedder is a rapid sketcher with a keen eye for color and an ability to finish from photos, he would be

sure to make a goodly *porte feuille* for future work; but the wind is the master of such journeys, dehabayahs depending on the sail. . . . Finally, for finishing his work there would hardly be time or space, but I think the work would be possible, if he is not dependent on roomy & comfortable painting quarters—wh. would not be possible on a boat 120 ft. long with 18 people in all for our service. . . . The river is full of artists . . . . At present England is buying Mr. Newman's<sup>6</sup> things and America is going up the Nile in Cooks' caravans. Who can tell what they will buy!"

Further encouragement came from the Vedders' long-time English friend, Amelia B. Edwards, author of the immensely popular *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile*, which was illustrated with an engraved reproduction of Vedder's *Questioner of the Sphinx* beginning with the first edition of 1877. She paused in the midst of preparations for an American lecture tour to eagerly assure Mrs. Vedder:

"He will sell pictures on the trip and send you home cheques, depend on it. *They all do.*—& certainly he will. Do not feel anxious about it dearest friend. . . . Egypt is *the* popular subject, both in art and literature now."

And to Vedder himself, she wrote encouragingly:

". . . You will make wonderful studies of colour, distance, ruins & natives. And again—Egypt is a *popular* subject; and your pictures from those studies will be in tremendous demand. . . . Again—an artist in Egypt can always sell 'pot boilers' on the river & at Cairo. People while traveling buy eagerly. I know that . . . others sell largely while there every season—& this will supply grist to the mill at home."

Other opinions were sought and by late October apprehensions were suffi-



Fig. 2. Elihu Vedder, "Opposite Our mooring place in Cairo." (*Journal*, "Cairo, Nov. 1889", Elihu Vedder Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.)

ciently allayed for Vedder to advise his aged father:

"... I have been invited to go up the Nile for about a thousand miles and shall there see the tombs of people who hoped to repose in them forever when they were stowed away, four thousand years ago."

It was entirely characteristic of him to conclude with a sentimentally nostalgic reference to his childhood in the Caribbean:

"I shall go far enough south to see the Southern Cross and shall think of you and how we used to see it in Cuba."

Carrie Vedder, much more matter-of-factly and no less characteristically for her, wrote to her mother in Boston:

"... It is quite settled that Vedder will go to Egypt for the winter with Mr. Corliss leaving early in Nov (from the 10th to the 12th) and you may imagine how much there is to attend for him alone when I was even before wild with all the rest on my hands."

In the end, practical more than romantic considerations determined Vedder's acceptance of Corliss's invitation. Clearly, the trip was expected to produce

paintings or, at least, sketches and photographs which could serve as the basis for paintings. Vedder told his father:

"We shall have room on the boat ... to paint and photograph at our ease. I hope to make a quantity of valuable sketches."

Once in Cairo, Vedder assembled materials to supplement those brought from Italy. He told Carrie of his preparations before the Nile voyage began:

"I spread my canvas to dry on the roof this morning. It makes a line about a mile long ..."

Months later, when the voyage was nearly over, he came close to exhausting his supply of drawing paper and wrote anxiously:

"Paper getting fearfully low. I counted on painting rather than on drawing and will explain some time why one paints so little."

At Assiut he went ashore to search for paper, but his supply was not sufficiently replenished until the party finally returned to Cairo. And once there, realizing his time in Egypt had about run out, Vedder painted, sketched, and photo-



graphed feverishly, even desperately, right up to the moment of his departure. Somehow, he also found time to purchase photographs of what he called “useful things.”

In any event, Corliss’s invitation was accepted and on November 9 Vedder departed, leaving Carrie in charge of the studio where she was to continue the weekly open-house and teas. She wrote frequently to Vedder, keeping him advised of the number of Sunday visitors, and was as scrupulous in identifying those who did *not* appear as those who did.

Vedder went from Rome to Naples where he took passage on the P. & O. steamer *Bengal* for Port Said and Ismailia. Carrie explained to her mother that Vedder did not mind that the sea voyage from Naples was longer than from Brindisi, even if there was a greater likelihood of becoming seasick. Besides, it was more economical. Mr. Corliss with Bessie Benedict and her daughter Helen met Vedder at the Hotel Angleterre in Cairo; they made the crossing from Brindisi.

As the party searched for a suitable dahabeah, Vedder reported to Carrie:

“We have seen every tub on the river . . . we have seen about all—the old Phili included, which will please Miss Edwards.<sup>7</sup> . . . After careful examination I concluded that they must have been built about the time of Thothmup III and are now held together by pack thread and glue and will surely go all to pieces when away from the bank.”

Ultimately, they selected a new, iron-hulled dahabeah called the *Sesostris* and made preparations for departure which included “a great blowout” as Vedder described it:

“Late in the afternoon quite a crowd of ladies from the Hotel Angleterre had

tea on board and the Consul (and others) dropped in. The Ark was gorgeously dressed out with flags, lanterns and palm branches and presented a grand appearance.”

Not until two days later, however, was there sufficient wind to move the *Sesostris* into the Nile and upriver against the current. And then rather promptly, it ran aground on a mudbank. But the voyage had begun and Vedder wrote frequently to Carrie, carefully noting in his Journal the content of each letter so as not to repeat himself or omit any item of interest; there was virtually nothing lacking interest. As often as not he passed along bits of gossip and impressions of personalities encountered. Flinders Petrie, working then at Amarna, was “little—insignificant—pleasant absolutely unaffected” in Vedder’s estimation. He was impressed by Sir Francis and Lady Grenfell and rather intrigued by the Bishop of Truro, “a little man with legs like a tuning fork,” accompanying a daughter rumored to be recovering from an unhappy affair of the heart. And with no editorial comment, he reported meeting the American painter Edwin Blashfield on board *The Seven Hathors*, a luxuriously appointed dahabeah belonging to expatriate Charles E. Wilbour, Blashfield’s father-in-law.

Vedder endured the physical impact of Egypt somewhat testily: the heat, the dust, the wind—“windstorms that fill your eyes with broken obelisks and bones of mummies”—and the cold—“Anthony and Cleoptra if they did any lovemaking in the musky shadows above Thebes must have done so—he in his Ulster and she in her fur jacket.” “Cold as blazes” was a favorite and frequent expression.

The visual impact of Egypt was another matter. Much of what he saw

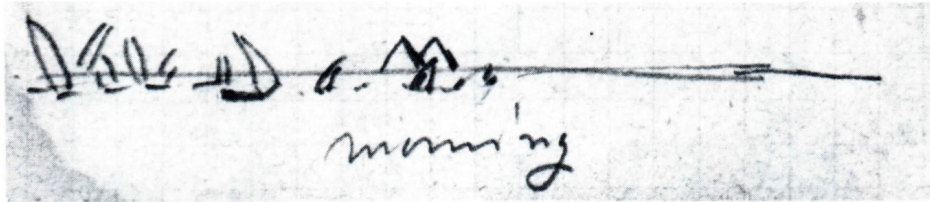


Fig. 3. Elihu Vedder, "Morning," November 16. (*Journal*, "Cairo, Nov. 1889," Elihu Vedder Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.)

struck him as familiar. The landscape near Aswan was:

"a perfect bit of desert just exactly what I had imagined it to be. In fact it looks very natural and familiar to me."

The Valley of the Kings elicited:

"such desolation I never saw but it was *exactly* the kind of thing I have always been trying to paint."

He was pleased when his dream pictures of Egypt were confirmed in those and other instances but he relished every experience:

"... at a great distance on the green plain sat two gray figures. The Memnon statues. I can't explain what a curious sensation it gave me,"  
"... a great ride by moonlight to Karnak—wonderful,"

And above all, his first view of the Pyramids and Sphinx at Giza:

"... we went about sunset ... I was simply struck dumb. I never saw nor shall I ever see such a thing again and I cannot imagine such another evening. Words are vain ... There are hotels and buildings but you lose sight of them as you get near the first pyramid ... you have to pass the first pyramid some distance before you come on the Sphinx—when you do what a sight meets you. We saw it with the foreground gradually going into shadow. I remember the shadows of the pyramid

stretching over the dark mud plains toward Cairo ..."

There were moments of disappointment, even irritation, though, when Vedder's romantic visions were contradicted as happened very soon after his arrival. He wrote to Carrie in the heart of Cairo where

"... everything is a picture except the view from my window which is an unfinished prot-episcopal church."

His first encounter with the Sphinx, breath-taking though it was, also had its disappointing side. He observed sadly:

"it is a pity that the Sphinx has been dug out but it will fill up again I hope."

At Abutig he winced at the sight of cast-iron balconies on minarets and called them "beastly." He deplored even the presence of imported European goods in a little shop in Girga, which spoiled for him an otherwise "splendid—untouched" vision of what he imagined an ancient town to have been.

However, his terse comments suggest there was almost nothing that did not hold some appeal. Vedder was captivated by "stunning effects of cloud shadows over plains and mountain." He marveled at sunsets and moonrises; and he observed, "Moonlight seems to permeate all things. The mountains which are always pink are pink at night





Fig. 4. Elihu Vedder, "Afternoon," November 16. (*Journal*, "Cairo, Nov. 1889," Elihu Vedder Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.)

as well—." He savored: "a perfect bit of desert . . . the sand lodged in the hills like yellow snow with absolute barrenness of all—the cold wind and a bit of steel blue water to the south." He was no less fascinated by camel drivers, dervishes, dancing girls, ragged children, and other native types wherever they were encountered. Unexpectedly, he is also revealed in the *Journal* and letters as an avid birdwatcher. At Meidum he reported:

"Yesterday it was storks and beautiful white spoon bills — ducks, geese, now immense flocks of geese — thousands — swimming and sleeping on sand banks."

And at Luxor:

" . . . near at hand a flight of storks and it was something grand. They sailed along forming beautiful lines in a most stately manner and seemed to know perfectly well what a fine figure they were making."

He was delighted with the barren and forbidding desert, but he was also enamored of the crowded, noisy life of villages—"really poetic scenes . . . nothing better." Typical was:

" . . . an arab town in the midst of a most wonderfully wild sunset—the palms

and pigeon towers against the sky the mud huts—the smoke arising everywhere—the dust—the dogs the people the mysteries of the gathering gloom . . . as thoroughly Egyptian as the simple grandeur of the desert."

On every hand and almost daily Vedder noted possibilities for paintings. Of the countryside north of Luxor, he remarked:

"I can't help thinking how much it looks as if *painted*. Last evening I saw a group of palm trees nearby with rich golden trunks and the whole thing looked as if nature tried to imitate a good picture."

Then he added in an aside to Carrie:

"You I know will say why did you not try to paint it in reality."

Interesting though Vedder's word-pictures were, Carrie did not find them a satisfactory substitute for paintings. With the voyage of the *Sesostris* perhaps no more than one-third completed, she demanded:

"Do you find it impossible to paint on the boat? You know that even impressions from your brush are valuable and I should think some of your memory sketches would be better than nothing. To me almost the worst is your getting

so out of the habit of work. I would paint every day just to keep my hand in and do something. Don't think because you can't have time to do all you want to that therefore you can do nothing, but rather do what you can and leave what you can't and *do* something every day if it is only to spoil canvas."

A distraught Vedder responded:

"I wish to God you could be here . . . so as to see for yourself how much time one has to sit down to paint as you may well imagine I know and feel all that is expected of me without being told of it and the thought keeps me nervous & excited and is the only thing which spoils my pleasure without doing any good but it has always been so. I suppose it will continue to the end of the chapter."

Mindful of her anxieties and perhaps stung by Carrie's scolding, Vedder made frequent reference thereafter to work in progress and difficulties encountered:

"going too fast . . . to draw anything," "always moving . . . everything alters so suddenly that the drawings I fear are of no value," "I bag as many outlines of them (i.e. mountains) as I can only the boat moving makes it rather hasty work." "Would fain draw the mountains and things better but we must *take* advantage of the wind and get on." ". . . But lord, how quick I had to be—a group of palms on the left would be far to the right before I had outlined the hills behind them. Nevertheless you will be astonished at the efforts I have obtained and also at the quantity of drawings."

Despite vicissitudes of the voyage, Vedder managed to produce an impressive quantity of paintings, sketches, drawings, and photographs. Exactly how many pieces, it is difficult to estimate, but they must have represented a considerable addition to the artist's baggage

when it was loaded on the Brindisi steamer in Alexandria on April 22, 1891.<sup>8</sup>

On April 26, once again in Italy, Vedder quickly scribbled a note to Carrie:

"Dear Chick, I telegraphed you yesterday of our arrival and I hope it will give you some of the pleasure that the fact gave me—for it would be impossible for anyone else to feel as glad as I did yesterday. In fact the greatest pleasure I have had since leaving is the getting back."

Vedder, accompanying the Corliss party which traveled by way of Naples and Pompeii, finally arrived back in Rome after an absence of nearly six months. Dutifully, Carrie reported to her mother:

"Vedder arrived on the third of May with his companions of the winter and they stayed in town until the following Tuesday. Sunday evening they all came to the house. . . . I am happy to find that Vedder is delighted to get home and in spite of all the luxury of the winter finds his *own* work most welcome and his *family* a pleasant change from the company of strangers. Let us hope it may last through the summer & until the time for strangers comes around again."

Although Vedder's winter in Egypt had been a very productive season for him, there is a curious lack of evidence that he painted many Egyptian subjects after the trip. In Carrie's records of pictures sold between 1856 and 1907, only one Egyptian subject is listed under 1891, the year immediately following Vedder's return to Rome. That entry reads:

"To Thomas K. Lothrop: Sketch on the Nile (small)."<sup>9</sup> Actually, *two* pictures were sold to Lothrop whose first name was Thornton, not Thomas. He wrote from Boston on September 23, 1891:

"We have the pictures . . . and we are all much indebted to you for two charm-



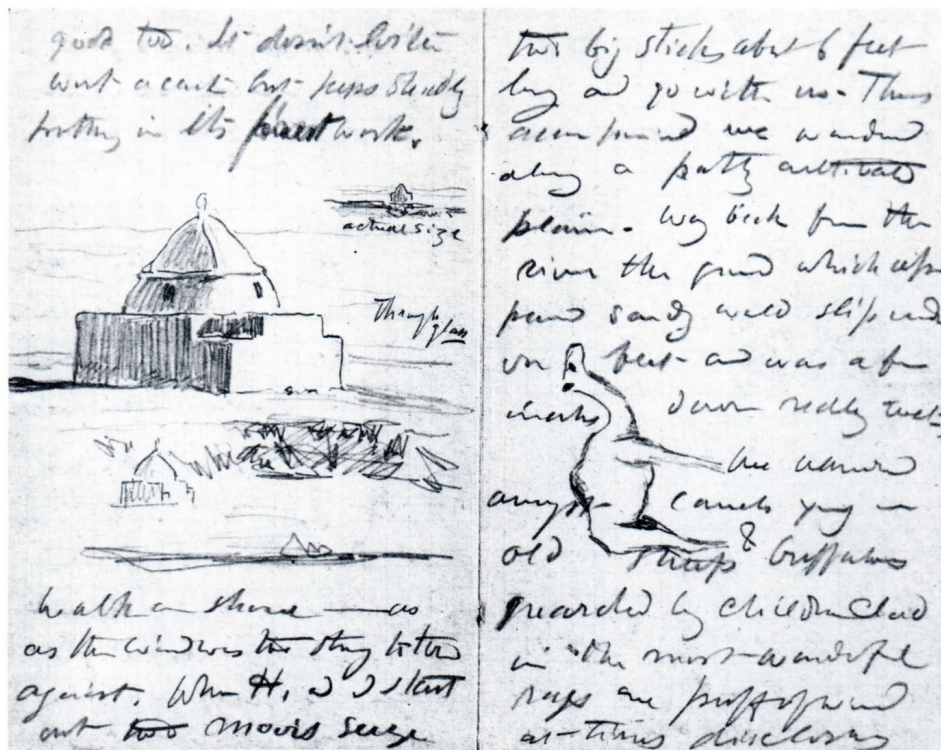


Fig. 5. Elihu Vedder, *Double Page with Sketches and Entries*, December 18. (*Journal*, "Cairo, Nov. 1889," Elihu Vedder Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.)

ing sketches, which, small as they are, contain in them nearly all Egypt—the Nile, the fertile valley, the desert sand hill, the sky, the atmosphere and the monuments make Egypt, and these all are there—I enclose you a draft on London for £100 . . ."

Vedder himself acknowledged there was sometimes little relation between the list and pictures actually painted and sold. In the same year that Lothrop bought his two paintings, Vedder presented another to Corliss as a gift, a sufficient explanation for its not being listed among works sold. Carrie described it as "a \$300 picture of a Nile subject" and told her

mother it had been sent in May. Not until August 30, though, did Corliss acknowledge its receipt in Providence:

"... at last the painting is here, a delight to the eyes, and potent remembrance of days that were but are not, for us at least . . ."

References to additional pictures indicate that Vedder did occupy himself with Egyptian subjects immediately upon his return. Helen Benedict, writing on September 19, 1890, alluded to:

"the Sphinxes etc. you are working on. How I should like to see them!"

Perhaps it was one of these that Corliss

saw when he visited Vedder's studio in late January or early February, 1891, and asked the price of a "... Sphinx with the dust storms or flurry yet to be added."

The Phoenix Art Museum's picture (Fig. 1), unmentioned and unidentified to this point, but dated 1891, belongs unquestionably to this group of paintings executed within a year of Vedder's return from Egypt. The picture's subject, because it is not a familiar monument, is difficult to identify. However, Vedder's letters to Carrie and the notes in his Journal do offer a possible identification that is more specific than that suggested by the picture's present title.

References abound in letters and the Journal to hills, mountains, and deserts; to buffaloes, donkeys, and camels; to mosques, domes, and minarets; and—above all else—to tombs. The fascination they held for Vedder was such that after the trip, Helen Benedict teased him:

"By the way, I am glad you had the opportunity of seeing some *tombs* in Naples, having been so deprived of that cheering pastime last winter."

Vedder's *Egyptian Landscape* could easily be thought of as a representative scene including "typical" elements met with anywhere and everywhere in Egypt, much as Lothrop had regarded his pictures. Such a supposition is supported by one interesting drawing in the Journal. In the midst of an unusually lengthy entry for December 18, Vedder sketched a picturesque group of figures and camels (Fig. 6)—not dissimilar to the massed forms of camels and men to the right of the Phoenix picture—and without otherwise identifying the sketch, labeled it, "Everywhere." Another typical or general feature of the picture is the impression of intense and bright light. References show Vedder to have been fascinated by the glare of Egyptian sunlight and at the

same time by the softness and subtlety of color which he also noted "everywhere."

In the Journal there are numerous sketches of domed structures and tombs that are close relatives of those in the painting (e.g. Fig. 5), leading one to assume that those in the painting may not necessarily be specific or particular. Yet there is one Journal entry which, with passages from letters to Carrie, suggests more than a general connection with the picture.

On January 29, Vedder wrote to Carrie:

"Here we are tied up to the bank of the small island of Elephantine opposite Assuan... British will not permit any to go farther into Nubia."

While the *Sesostris* and other boats were prohibited from sailing farther, Vedder was urged to secure passage on a British sternwheeler and complete the trip as originally planned to Abu Simbel, Wadi Halfa, and the Second Cataract. This he did, but while waiting for permission from Cairo to do so, Vedder made excursions into the region about Aswan and produced a considerable body of work. He visited Philae at least twice and there discovered Newman,

"... tranquilly painting in the temple ... laying siege of course to the most striking subject. He only proposes painting two or three pictures during this stay. The other one I saw was a general view of Philae which between ourselves I think very stupid, both works of patience rather than of art ..."

Other Journal entries show how Vedder spent his time while waiting to ascend the river into Nubia:

"1/22 over towards Ctn Convent in the desert  
1/23 made sketch of rocks in river



- 1/24 Philae
- 1/25 long donkey ride
- 1/26 sketch of tombs and desert—Sunday
- 1/27 big sketch tombs and desert—Monday
- 1/28 long walk with H. sketch rocks, trees
- 1/29 took sail down river tombs heaps of bones thrown out
- 1/30 Sketch morning of tombs on road white domes—background for figs ...

He amplified the last entry with its specific mention of white domes—essential and strikingly conspicuous elements of the Phoenix picture—in a letter to Carrie:

“30th made sketch of a roadside with tombs for which I wanted the photographs of figures but of course the next day when I went out they wouldn’t pass by.”

“... the people had gone on to Philae on donkeys and I stayed to paint and being on the desert road I waited for them and rode back with them by moonlight. It was wonderful out among the tombs. ... I went photographing on my own hook and took six things which will be useful particularly camels.”

On the basis of this testimony provided by the artist himself it is possible to advance a tentative identification of the painting as a scene on the desert road between Aswan and Philae where Vedder painted tombs and, specifically, white domes—the only such reference in the entire body of documents. This, he wanted to use as a background for figures which he hoped to photograph the next day. When he did return to the site for that purpose, though, “they wouldn’t pass by.” The figure groups of “staffage,” consequently, were invented by Vedder, presumably on the basis of sketches and photographs—perhaps the “six things

which will be useful particularly camels”—made in the same locale.<sup>10</sup>

It is strange that the Egyptian journey should have resulted in so few finished paintings, among them the Phoenix Art Museum’s *Egyptian Landscape*, particularly in view of how carefully the trip was justified before it was undertaken. Financial pressures may have prompted Vedder to immediately resume painting subjects that had demonstrated ability to attract visitors and potential purchasers to his Rome studio—instead of speculating in untested Egyptian subjects—in an anxious effort to regain his financial position so unfavorably affected by his absence in Egypt. Throughout the trip Vedder had been troubled with reports of declining sales from Carrie and possibly other disturbing matters. At one point he consoled Carrie:

“Poor Chick why should you be disappointed at not being able to sell any of my pictures. I can see that no one wants that sort of thing. What can I do about it I don’t know but that I leave till I get back. I foresee I shall have to pay for this outing, however dearly enough so and won’t think of it now and there is no use.”

Matters did not improve at home and on April 6, with the voyage over and the *Sesostris* once again moored in Cairo, Vedder wrote to Carrie:

“... I had been in a state of joy and excitement at the near prospect of sailing for home but your beastly letter took all the pleasure out of me and I am not over it yet. I was trying to write up my journal in the hot little cabin fighting the flies meanwhile and seeing if I could *do it* and not miss the rapidly moving scenes outside—making drawings when possible—but I gave up the Journal and don’t know if I shall write anymore. I see it is no use—nothing can satisfy permanent discon-



Fig. 6. Elihu Vedder, "Everywhere," December 18. (*Journal*, "Cairo, Nov. 1889," Elihu Vedder Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.)

tent. If you had kept back all troubles and annoyances then you had better have gone on doing so and not spoiled it all. I see all the trouble ahead God knows well enough but had tried to forget for a brief space as it could do no good brooding over it but you have pretty well brought it all to mind and so I come back—but I don't *now* know whether I am glad to. As I said I was full of the thought of getting home again but if that is the sort of things I am coming back to I had rather stay away."

In the end Vedder saw no solution but to request a loan of \$2000 from Corliss. Carrie was distressed and her feelings can be measured in terms of her elation one year later when the loan was repaid in full. She wrote jubilantly to her family in Boston (May 15, 1891):

"... our great news of the winter ... Vedder has sold his large painting of *The Last Man* ... Had we *only* been out of debt this would have made us feel quite rich, but \$2000 (less \$100) had to be instantly paid to Corliss—the money he lent Vedder last year when they came back from Egypt; on Ved-

der's note falling due the 17th of May. He would not have troubled us about payment I am sure, but what happiness of writing him on the 6th that we were prepared to pay principal and interest as agreed. You will see that he declined interest, for which we thanked him very kindly. Vedder was inclined to insist on paying the interest but I have no pride on such a point & took good care to only deposit to his account the frs9500 actually lent, and to draw the extra 500 which I had deposited for interest. Vedder has given him a \$300-picture of a Nile subject, so I don't think even he has done badly and Vedder gave each of the ladies something—to Mrs. Benedict a medallion bas-relief of St. Cecilia \$150 which he made last fall and to Helen a colored print of the Pleiades such as he sells for \$30 and I certainly feel that he has thoroughly paid his way for nearly 7 months very greatly adding to the distinction of their party and their pleasure."

While such practical "preoccupations" may partially explain the dearth of Egyptian subjects, another explanation



may be sought in easily established spiritual or psychological bases. For Vedder, Egypt had existed in his imagination for almost a quarter of a century before he confronted it as physical reality. The experience was unsettling. He expressed dismay at the appearance of the excavated Sphinx and hoped that sand might once again bury it. His original and instinctive urge, though, was to paint the Sphinx; but facing the mute colossus, he hesitated:

“All the things I have seen strike me as absolutely vulgar. If it has been at all well painted I have not seen the works. Indeed all the things I have seen . . . seem to be somewhat trivial—perhaps my things will look the same.”

At the end of the trip when he finally did set to painting the Sphinx, it was apparently at Corliss’s suggestion. In Giza, he explained to Carrie:<sup>11</sup>

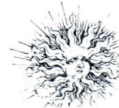
“Mr. Corliss wanted me to try something here. I would have been contented to paint in Cairo however. Yet it is all right.”

The physical facts of the hulking, eroded ruin could only compromise the romantic vision of Egypt Vedder had nourished since his youth. That there may have been a reluctance to betray his vision is suggested by an explanation he offered in another context. Contemplating the mysterious fascination and appeal of ancient monuments, Vedder declared that their attraction

“. . . would only be dulled or lessened by a greater unveiling of their mysteries . . . to me Isis unveiled would be Isis dead. The Roman Forum was infinitely more poetic buried than it is disinterred, and the sight of the skeleton is more painful than poetic.”<sup>12</sup>

It may be less speculative to consider also the professional opportunities that

confronted Vedder soon after his return from Egypt. Increasingly he became aware of and preoccupied with possibilities for monumental architectural commissions in America which included Bowdoin College, the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, C. P. Huntington’s New York Mansion, and, ultimately, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In the face of negotiations for such grand projects as well as planning and executing them, there cannot have been much time or inclination to indulge a romantic impulse to paint small pictures, intimate in scale and rich in personal associations, recalling a winter’s voyage on the Nile.



## Notes

\* Grateful acknowledgment is made of assistance lent by personnel of the Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C., Detroit, and San Francisco in the preparation of this study. Help and support of Phoenix Art Museum staff members is no less warmly appreciated.

<sup>1</sup>Acc. no. 65-56. Oil on canvas (re-lined), 10" x 20". First exhibited in 1959 as *Scene in the Holy Land*. Erroneously described as "Signed, lower left: *E. Vedder* 1917," *Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture in the Phoenix Art Museum Collection*, compiled by James Harithas (Phoenix, 1965), p. 204. The painting is in fact dated, "1891."

<sup>2</sup>Elihu Vedder, *The Digressions of V* (Boston & New York, 1910), pp. 451-454.

<sup>3</sup>The discovery was made in 1957 by Regina Soria who drew heavily upon them for her *Elihu Vedder: American Visionary Artist in Rome* (1836-1923). (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck, 1970). The Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, are presently custodians of these materials which cover a 40-year span of the artist's life.

<sup>4</sup>Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Bequest of Mrs. Martin Brimmer. Oil on canvas, 36" x 41¾", 1863.

<sup>5</sup>Unless noted otherwise, all quotations are from the Journal and correspondence preserved in the A.A.A.

<sup>6</sup>"Mr. Newman" is Robert Rodrick Newman (1833/43-1918), an American who studied briefly with Gérôme and collaborated with John Ruskin on illustrations for the latter's *Stones of Venice*.

He and his wife were popular members of the British and American colony in Florence where he maintained a studio.

<sup>7</sup>The *Philae*, the dahabeah on which Miss Edwards made her 1000-mile Nile journey in the winter of 1873-74, was 100 feet long, 20 feet broad, had a main salon with white and gold paneling, a bright Brussels carpet, and a piano!

<sup>8</sup>Soria, *op cit.*, p. 203, estimated, "In all, including the oil ones, which he numbered, he brought back from Egypt 160 sketches." Journal references, however, indicate he had completed at least 163 drawings or sketches—*exclusive* of those done in oil—by March 31. Moreover, he continued to produce work for nearly three weeks more until his departure for Alexandria on April 20.

<sup>9</sup>Carrie's sales records, as published in Vedder, *op cit.*, p. 488.

<sup>10</sup>The Vedder files of the A.A.A. contain an interesting assortment of photographs, but none connected with Egypt which might corroborate the artist's statement.

<sup>11</sup>The picture in question is presumably that belonging to E. P. Richardson, Philadelphia.

<sup>12</sup>Vedder, *op. cit.*, p. 451f.



## Theodore Roszak's *Emergence: Transition I* At Arizona State University

by Joan Seeman Robinson

*Emergence* is the first of Theodore Roszak's sculptures to suggest organic nature and to possess an aura of aggressive force. Since 1932 he had created smoothly machined objects symbolizing a technological ideal in content and technique. One of his principal themes had been modern flight, rendered poetically by geometric forms whose purity suggested transcendent states as well as the scientific means toward a utopian future.

But by the end of World War II he reassessed his earlier optimism and the premises upon which it had been based. He said, "Constructive purposes and intentions exist, [but] the world is fundamentally and seriously disquieted and it is difficult to remain unmoved and complacent in its midst." Rather than assembling his sculptures of separately formed elements he began welding and brazing, wishing to reflect the unquiet times through emotional content and through a more volatile, intuitive handling.

Of *Emergence* he said, "It marks a period of transition from deliberate and precisely executed relationships to gradual evolvment into freer forms . . . I like to feel that material which can be shaped at white heat and is subject to various nuances of chemical action is the best means for implementing the spirit embodied in the work of this period."

*Emergence* suggests a figure burdened by flailing and rent wings, whose

knobby and metallic body—though welded—seems to have grown, or to have been crudely poured and then congealed, rather than to have been constructed. Its X-form torso divides at the base into minimal legs. At the top the symmetry of its branching appendages is superficial: equal in breadth they are alike in detail, suggesting an insidious malformation. These top-heavy extensions are of a "many-pointed form, like a Victory's severed wing which suggest antlers," to adopt Lawrence Alloway's description used to characterize similar biomorphic shapes then occurring in painting.

When he made *Emergence* he wrote of this period, "Transition, among other things, implies a degree of change which for me constitutes an end and a beginning." This comment suggests a watershed experience—the awareness that he was crossing a divide. But what he did not remark upon was the awful aspect of the work, its ravaged and demonic character, which assigns to his temporal definition of "transition" and "emergence" a terrible and even traumatic quality. Such emotional content will emerge in his famous *Spectre of Kitty Hawk*, 1946-47, another menacing, striding form, in what seems to have been a determined solicitation of hitherto rejected states of mind, imagination, and sensation for his art.



Fig. 1 Theodore Roszak, *Emergence: Transition I*, 1945 (Steel and bronze) Oliver B. James Collection of American Art, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.





*La peur donnant des ailes au courage,*  
by Jean Cocteau; a drawing in the  
Phoenix Art Museum

by Anne Gully and Susan Benforado Gunther

In his *Opium, Journal d'une Désintoxication*, Jean Cocteau warns us off artistic biography,

Je me demande comment les gens peuvent écrire la vie des poètes, puisque les poètes eux-mêmes ne pourraient écrire leur propre vie. Il y a trop de mystères, trop de vrais mensonges, trop d'enchevêtrement.<sup>1</sup>

Poetry for Cocteau was creative expression, whatever the form. Tangles, mysteries, and oxymoronic, truthful lies abound in Cocteau's own *poésies*, the *poésie graphique*, *poésie plastique*, *poésie de roman*, *poésie critique*, *poésie de cinéma*, and, most particularly, in a *poésie* not acknowledged as a type by Cocteau, but which at once subsumed and fired all the rest, a *poésie de la vie*.

A drawing in the Phoenix Art Museum by Cocteau, *La peur donnant des ailes au courage*, (Fig. 1)<sup>2</sup> reflects Cocteau's preoccupation with his own experiences, real, imagined, and mythologized, his almost obsessive use of various motifs, and his frequent employment of unusual juxtapositions and dream-like images, a technique associated with the Surrealists, with whom he had an uneasy relationship.

Measuring five by nine feet (152 x 273 cm) and done in black crayon with touches of pink and green on two pieces of linen stitched horizontally, the drawing is signed *Jean* on a small banderole, with Cocteau's emblematic star ap-

pended, and is dated 1938. At the lower right, Cocteau has written *Paris-Londres*, undoubtedly a reference to the drawing's composition in Paris in the early days of 1938 for his one-man show in London at Peggy Guggenheim's gallery, Guggenheim Jeune, from January 12 to February 24, 1938, a show organized by Marcel Duchamp.<sup>3</sup>

British customs officials at first refused to allow the drawing into the country, but relented, according to Peggy Guggenheim, when she promised not to display it; she hung it, with fig-leaves attached, in her office at Guggenheim Jeune, and eventually bought it.<sup>4</sup>

Four personages, almost theatrical in their appearance and disposition, are set close to the picture plane: from left to right, a turbaned female, nude except for a cloth swathed low about her hips and inscribed, bandage-like wrappings around her torso, head, and arms; a man, red-haired and green-eyed, dressed in fish-net underwear, the shorts overlaid with swathed cloth; a figure of indeterminate sex, wearing only a helmet and the same draping as the others, its arm clasping a female bust with long hair and staring eyes, its left leg extending behind the red-haired man to reveal a winged foot; a fragmented male, suspended in space, clad only in suspenders and garters and a crayoned fig leaf.

The drawing contains one indisputable reference to Cocteau's life at the

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A Drawing by Jean Cocteau

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Fig. 1. Jean Cocteau, *La peur donnant des ailes au courage*, crayon on linen, Accession number 64/86. Collection of the Phoenix Art Museum; Gift of Mr. Cornelius Ruxton Love, Jr.

time—the red-haired young man is a portrait of Jean Marais (Fig. 2), the protagonist of several of Cocteau's films, whom Cocteau had met in 1937 and with whom he lived until the early 1950's. This rendering, one of many Cocteau did of Marais in various incarnations, presents him as straightforward, even ingenuous, his pose, bearing, and expression harboring no hidden thoughts, no surprises, the ideal youth, "that Antinous sprung from the people,<sup>5</sup> who seems to have provided Cocteau with profound and rejuvenating inspiration. Cocteau appears here to confess his attraction to Marais, to admit again what he had never concealed, his admiration for "*le beau sexe, le sexe fort*," particularly when young and fresh.<sup>6</sup>

Although the other figures in the drawing seem to be types characteristic of Cocteau, rather than portraits,<sup>7</sup> they can also be seen as embodiments of cer-



Fig. 2. Jean Cocteau, *La peur donnant des ailes au courage*, (detail).



tain of his memories and obsessions, evoking that interpenetration of discrete worlds he described in *Opium*,

... l'intuition très nette de mondes qui se superposent, se compénètrent, et ne s'entre-soupçonnent même pas.<sup>8</sup>

Cocteau attributes this perceptual conjuring trick to opium. However, it probably relates more closely to Surrealist techniques of free association, seen in films such as *Le Sang d'un Poète* and *Orphée*, and commonplace in Cocteau's work as a whole. Further, despite the astonishing range of Cocteau's creative output, the components and themes of his *oeuvre* are remarkably consistent, allowing, even urging, the interpretation of an individual work in the light of the whole.

The female figure at the far left in *La peur donnant des ailes au courage* (Fig. 3) appears as sinister as Marais does sincere. Her shifty eye, her serpent-like tongue, out-thrust in a gesture mingling contempt with sensuality, the brandished Ace of Spades, a symbol of death, the drop of her swathings to reveal her genitals, all speak of woman the untrustworthy, woman the entrapper, again, a theme familiar from Cocteau's plays, novels, and later, his films, and related to his own, male-dominated life.

This figure may represent, in allusion if not in fact, a woman with whom Cocteau was involved from 1930, when he met her at a private viewing of *Le Sang d'un Poète*, until the early forties, and, on the available literary evidence, into the fifties as well. She was Nathalie Paley, to posterity the Princess, beautiful, aristocratic, and married, with whom Cocteau "seems almost instantly, amid clouds of opium, to have decided to 'fall in love' and beget a son,"<sup>9</sup> the one form of creation that Cocteau the poet, the

creator, had not yet assayed.

Cocteau's many "adoptions" of young men, whether euphemisms for his homosexual affairs or, as later, real attempts to acquire progeny, bespeak his unachieved, and in view of his self-confessed "*amour des garçons*" unachievable, desire for a son of his own. Despite his misogyny, the only way to produce a child was, as Peter Wimsey has observed, via the "old-fashioned procedure," which, unfortunately for Cocteau, required a woman. That he did attempt to sire a child seems clear from various accounts of his affair with Nathalie Paley. She herself said,

I was mad about Jean's wit and charm, but for him the affair with me was purely physical. He wanted a son, but he was only as potent with me as one can be who is completely homosexual and full of opium. It was all shameful and disgraceful. There was no love. I didn't inspire a single one of his poems—I had no good effect at all on his writings: everyone knows that that was the least productive period of his life . . . There was much gossip and my husband asked for a divorce. Finally I went to Switzerland to think things over . . . He said he wanted to marry me, but I doubt that he would have gone through with it.<sup>10</sup>

Cocteau himself apparently talked of nothing else for a year. The persistence of this obsession, and its unhappy finish, is documented by an account of Cocteau's behavior after leaving Paris to escape the Occupation in June, 1940, during his sojourn in the south of France with the family of Dr. Pierre Nicolau. Nicolau's oldest son, who was sixteen at the time, recalls Cocteau as ill and upset, worried about the war, about Marais, about his work, and about his feelings for Nathalie Paley. He told the family that



Fig. 3. Jean Cocteau, *La peur donnant des ailes au courage*, (detail).

he had loved only one woman in his life, the Princess; he said further that she had been pregnant by him and had gone to Switzerland for an abortion, an act which had killed his love for her.<sup>11</sup> Earlier, this had made the rounds of Paris society, which joked that all this was clearly an impossibility, as “there had always been an opium tray between them.”<sup>12</sup>

What is significant about this affair is not its consummation or non-consummation, the Princess’s pregnancy and subsequent abortion or their invention, but rather Cocteau’s belief that he had lost the longed-for son and that a woman was responsible for his loss. It cannot be coincidence that the figure of the Poet’s Death in the film, *Orphée*, made in 1950, is called the Princess. In the earlier play, *Orphée*, 1927, the Poet’s Death was simply a beautiful woman. In conversation, Cocteau often referred to Paley as “Prin-

cess Fafner,” a reference to the Norse ogre, and, in old age, to women in general as “those killers of poets’ children.”<sup>13</sup>

The words and phrases written on the bandeaux wrapped about the woman at the left in *La peur donnant des ailes au courage*, at first reading cryptic, even meaningless, in the aggregate reinforce the identification of the figure with the incident of the Princess and Cocteau’s lost child.

Transcribed, the phrases read as follows, on the head: *un enfant est/ je me/ dans un monde/ il est terrible de ne pas/ le coeur* (illegible)/ *et votre*; on the neck: *ce qui m’apparaît/ je suis chargé de/ je/ et votre/ et je cou* (illegible)/ *non pas*; on the right arm: *no non/ et si/ (illegible)/ et so(n?) style/ je ne veux/ de la beauté/ et toi/ et le vrai*; on the left arm: *elle était belle/ non, (vous?) ne/ et encore je/ si* (illegible)/ *en 1938, (illegible)/ je n’ai/ j’(aimerais?)/ mon destin/ si je* (illegible, perhaps *te?*) *rencontre*; on the torso: *et le danger que j’aime/ qu* (illegible)/ *du(?)* (illegible)/ *noblesse/ j’ai vo* (illegible)/ *le sortilege* [sic] *de votre voix* (with star drawn at the end of the phrase)/ *non/ la chevreuse(?)*. In addition, on the outstretched arm of Jean Marais is the word *merde*.

Just as the apparently meaningless sentences issuing from the car radio to inspire the poet Orphée in the film of that name actually carry a poetic weight of their own—“*Toiseau chante avec ses doigts*,” for example, comes from a short poem in a letter Apollinaire wrote to Cocteau—so the scribbled phrases in *La peur donnant des ailes au courage* suggest a meaning beyond the literal.

The mention of a child (*un enfant est*), the persistent negatives (*il est terrible de ne pas, non pas, je ne veux, je n’ai, and non*), and the allusion to feminine beauty in the past tense (*elle était belle*) bring



to mind the Princess and the story associated with her and Cocteau. Further references to beauty, including *le sortilege de votre voix*, could apply equally to a woman or to a man, in this case to Marais, while *noblesse* could conceivably serve as a double-edged reference, to Paley's aristocratic lineage, with a sarcastic secondary comment on her behavior, and to Marais's unremarkable ancestry, coupled with nobility of spirit and form. The long phrase on the torso, *et le danger que j'aime*, recalls Cocteau's *Livre Blanc*, a confession of homosexuality and a description of the dangerous games the narrator, a thinly veiled stand-in for Cocteau himself, played, living his life while concealing from family and society its peculiar character. *Et encore je* on the left arm implies an unfulfilled wish, while, further down, *mon destin* may hint at an acceptance of things as they are, even a realization that they will never be any different. These suggestive phrases seem to reinforce the message of the drawing, figures, and title, as we shall see below.

At the extreme right in the drawing (Fig. 4) is a man, fragmented, off-balance, star-stunned. The jagged angles behind this figure, and its disposition, lacking feet to hold it firm on the ground, the suggestion that it might be falling backwards into space, inevitably recall another long-lived obsession of Cocteau's, a fascination with angels and their nature. In *Orphée*, Heurtebise's angelic nature manifests itself in two ways, in his ability to hang suspended in space, and in his ability to pass himself and others through mirrors, an attribute he shared with the Princess, the Poet's Death.

Based on "moving," if erroneous, information provided him by a Hebrew scholar,<sup>14</sup> Cocteau was convinced that



Fig. 4. Jean Cocteau, *La peur donnant des ailes au courage*, (detail).

the words angel and angle were synonymous,

La chute des anges peut aussi se traduire: chute des angles. La sphère est faite d'un amalgame d'angles. Par les angles, par les pointes, s'échappe la force ... Chute des angles signifie donc: sphère idéale, disparition de la force divine, apparition du conventionnel, de l'humain.<sup>15</sup>

Cocteau proceeds to define the angelic nature, and to note the poet's possession of it,

Désintéressement, égoïsme, tendresse, pitié, cruauté, souffrance des contacts, pureté dans la débauche, mélange d'un goût violent pour les plaisirs de la terre et de mépris pour eux, amoralité naïve, ne vous y trompez pas: voilà les signes de ce que nous nommons l'angélisme et que possède

tout vrai poète, qu'il écrive, peigne,  
sculpte, ou chante.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, after citing Rimbaud, Verlaine, and Satie as poetic, angelic types, Cocteau describes the angelic poet's status, that of a person without a country, bereft of the necessary identity papers, singled out by the world for harassment,

L'au-delà noie les uns et coupe la  
jambe aux autres. L'hôpital, l'assassinat,  
l'opium, l'amour, tout lui est bon  
pour en finir vite et reprendre ces en-  
fants perdus.<sup>17</sup>

It seems likely that this transcendent, almost other-worldly figure, without legs, and surrounded by falling angles, represents the poet, Cocteau and all creative artists. His posture prefigures a scene in *Le Testament d'Orphée*, 1959, in which the Poet, played by Cocteau, rises without bending his knees, after having been speared, and returns to life like the phoenix.<sup>18</sup>

Recurring in Cocteau's work and central to the two films mentioned above is the symbolism of the mirror. In *Orphée*, mirrors are the doors by which Death and her angelic attendants come and go. The poet figure in the Phoenix Art Museum drawing, a silhouette-like mirror image visible behind his head and along his back and legs, appears to fall into or emerge from the water which is broken like a mirror. In just this way do we see the Poet in *Le Sang d'un Poète*; he entered a pool of water, photographed to resemble glass, and emerged by a reversal of the film.

The presence of Cocteau's lover and "son," Jean Marais, the sinister female, and the mirror imagery combine to suggest an allegory of creation, poetic and physical. As Margaret Crosland has written of Cocteau's imagery in general,

The mirror and its inevitable association with Narcissus, is never far away from the image of death, and from the realization that homosexual love cannot bring total happiness in ordinary human terms because it cannot perpetuate life.<sup>19</sup>

The helmeted central figure in the Phoenix Art Museum drawing seems to provide the logical completion to the allegory. Its winged foot, heroic stance, and the classical bust it holds imply that it is an allegorical figure, most likely the Courage of the drawing's title. The figure links the female and Marais on the left with the fragmented poet/angel figure on the right. Its action, pulling a laurel-like vine from the poet's mouth, suggests that the poet is not meant to put forth a vine, to produce physical descendents; rather, his task is to produce poetry, and for these creations, the poet's wreath is his reward, everlasting fame his progeny.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the title of the drawing is, at first glance, merely one in a long line of enigmatic inversions, familiar from Cocteau's films, where unreal, even surreal, statements issue from an off-screen narrator or from a radio. In fact, the title has a coherence of its own, as well as a previous existence in Cocteau's graphic work.

"Donner des ailes à quelqu'un," literally, to give wings to someone, has, in French, the sense of accelerating the course of something, or of investing an emotion or task with enthusiasm.<sup>21</sup> Cocteau's earlier use of the phrase, *La peur donnant des ailes au courage*, occurs in a drawing dated 1926 and published in 1930 as one of the illustrations to *Opium*.<sup>22</sup> This drawing shows an agonized man, his eyes blinded, his mouth open in pain, a fitting accompaniment to



a book about the trauma of drug withdrawal, and acknowledged as such by Cocteau who said, in *Opium*,

Je laisse au dessin la besogne d'exprimer les tortures que l'impuissance médicale inflige à ceux qui chassent un remède en train de devenir un despote.<sup>23</sup>

The 1926 drawing relates to the Phoenix Art Museum work in significance rather than in style; though less complex, the earlier work's subject is similar, representing the physical and, no doubt, the mental, torture involved in ridding oneself of a noxious habit, or by extension, with relation to the 1938 drawing, of an egregious *bête noire*. In addition, the *Opium* drawing has appended to the title the word *Allégorie*, allowing the inference that Cocteau re-used the title, *La peur dormant des ailes au courage*, with allegorical intent, delineating the childless poet's dilemma, and the solution urged upon him by Courage, to endure and to create.

The drawing in the Phoenix Art Museum brings together actors, events, and obsessions from Cocteau's life, melding them into a whole which is at once charming, emblematic, revelatory of Cocteau's deepest concerns, and which suggests a degree of consciousness in construction that Cocteau was often at pains to deny in his work. Cocteau was, clearly, no Horace, and this drawing, regardless of thematic analogies, no "*Exegi monumentum*." Nevertheless, Cocteau, in the persona of the Poet might say, with Horace, "I have raised my monument, more enduring than brass," or, in his own deliberately contradictory words, taken from the Preface he wrote to his 1938 exhibition at Guggenheim Jeune, for which *La peur dormant des ailes au courage* was destined,

Le moment est venu de ne plus faire ce que je fais, le moment est venu de faire ce que je fais, le moment est venu de ne plus jamais faire ce que j'ai fait et défait . . . Mesdames, Messieurs, il est fou de s'exposer inutilement.<sup>24</sup>



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>"I ask myself how people think they can write poets' lives, since poets themselves are incapable of writing their own lives. There are too many mysteries, too many truthful lies, too many tangles." Jean Cocteau, *Opium, Journal d'une Désintoxication* (Paris, 1930), p. 244. Translation by the authors.

<sup>2</sup>The authors thank Katherine Dee and Andrea Rubenstein of the Phoenix Art Museum staff for photographs and for access to the drawing itself and to the museum's files. The drawing is mentioned in Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau, A Biography* (Boston, 1970), p. 494, and in Peggy Guggenheim, *Confessions of an Art Addict* (New York, 1960), pp. 48-9. It is listed in *Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures in the Phoenix Art Museum* (Phoenix, 1965), p. 20, which states, incorrectly, that Cocteau (1889-1963) was born in 1892 and that the drawing is signed "Cocteau." The date is also omitted. The drawing is illustrated in *Jean Cocteau: Poète Graphique*, edited by Pierre Chanel with a preface by André Fraigneau (Paris, 1975), p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>A catalogue for the show survives in the National Art Library in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Cocteau wrote a preface which appeared with a translation by Samuel Beckett, Peggy Guggenheim's lover at the time. She was married to Laurence Vail from 1922 to 1929 and did not marry again until 1941, when she married Max Ernst. The story that the Phoenix drawing was a wedding gift from Cocteau to Peggy Guggenheim, as supposed in the Phoenix Art Museum files and catalogue, is therefore unfounded. The drawing is popularly called a bedsheet, but its proportions and

the roughness of the cloth make this improbable.

<sup>4</sup>Peggy Guggenheim sold the drawing to Cornelius Ruxton Love, Jr., her second cousin's husband, around 1960, and Mr. Love gave it to the Phoenix Art Museum in October, 1964. In a letter in the Phoenix Art Museum's files to F. M. Hinkhouse, then director of the Museum, dated 21 September 1964, Mr. Love wrote,

We have just visited Peggy Guggenheim in Venice. She said you had just left. A few years ago I bought from her the famous Jean Cocteau painting on a sheet that he gave her as a wedding present. She asked if I still had it—when Cocteau saw her the last time he asked her about it—and she told him she still had it . . .

Mr. Love then asked if the Phoenix Museum would like to have the drawing, and added a postscript, "It's extraordinary!" This is followed by a letter from Peggy Guggenheim to Hinkhouse, dated 8 November 1964, which says, "I am glad you got the Cocteau Sheet. How did you know about it?" We thank Mr. Love's widow, Mrs. C. Ruxton Love, and her daughter, Miss Iris Love, for their assistance. Peggy Guggenheim wrote in *Confessions of an Art Addict* that Cocteau made two large drawings for her show at Guggenheim Jeune. We also thank Angelica Rudenstine of the Guggenheim Museum, New York, and Professor Samuel R. Peterson of Arizona State University who tried to locate this second drawing. It does not appear to exist. The Phoenix drawing was hung again in 1938 at the Galerie Rive Gauche in Paris from 22 November to 6 December, and though the Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Ar-



chéologie and the Bibliothèque Nationale kindly replied to our inquiries, they had no information to offer about this exhibition.

<sup>5</sup>Steegmuller, p. 435. A photograph of Marais as the Chorus in the 1937 production of Cocteau's *Oedipe-Roi* shows him in a costume designed by Gabrielle Chanel, consisting of wrapped and knotted strips of cloth, like bandages, very similar to the wrappings on the female figure. See Pierre Chanel, *Album Cocteau*, p. 119. A drawing by Cocteau of the same subject is reproduced in Chanel, *Poète Graphique*, p. 111.

<sup>6</sup>Cocteau, *Le Livre Blanc* (Paris, 1970; reprint of original ed.), p. 9.

J'ai toujours aimé le sexe fort que je trouve légitime d'appeler le beau sexe. Mes malheurs sont venues d'une société qui condamne le rare comme un crime et nous oblige à reformer nos penchants.

Translation by the authors:

I have always loved the strong sex that I find reasonable to call the beautiful sex. My unhappiness has come from a society which condemns the unusual as a crime and obliges us to change our inclinations.

<sup>7</sup>As suggested by Francis Steegmuller in a letter to the authors, 26 June 1980.

<sup>8</sup>Cocteau, *Opium*, p. 148. Translated by Margaret Crosland in *Cocteau's World* (London, 1972), p. 433,

Opium, which changes our speeds, procures for us a very clear awareness of worlds which are superimposed on each other, which interpenetrate each other, but do not even suspect each other's existence.

<sup>9</sup>Steegmuller, p. 420. He does not name her in his biography, but does mention her by name in his letter to the authors of 26 June 1980. She is discussed, too, by Elizabeth Sprigge and Jean-Jacques Kihm in their *Jean Cocteau: The Man and the Mirror* (New York, 1968), p. 148-9.

<sup>10</sup>Steegmuller, p. 420 and p. 426. He notes that,

A frame displaying her photograph stood near Cocteau's bed; hidden within was a second photo, representing, in the words of one who prefers to remain anonymous, "un jeune homme assez souple et assez bien pourvu pour pratiquer sur lui-même ce que les médecins appellent laidement le *felatio*."

<sup>11</sup>Sprigge and Kihm, pp. 148-9.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Steegmuller, p. 427.

<sup>13</sup>Steegmuller, p. 427.

<sup>14</sup>Jean Cocteau, *Le secret professionnel*, 1922, in Jean Cocteau, *Poésie critique*, I (Paris, 1959), p. 38,

A ce propos, Mme Bessonnet-Fabre, si profondément, et, pourrait-on dire, si bourgeoisement versée dans la science de l'hébreu, me donne une leçon émouvante. Ange et angle, dit-elle, sont synonymes en hébreu.

We would like to thank Caroline Benforado for her assistance with this and the following citations from *Le secret professionnel*.

<sup>15</sup>Cocteau, *Le secret professionnel*, p. 38. Translation by the authors,

The fall of angels may also convey: the fall of angles. The world is made up of

an amalgam of angles. From the angles, from the points, power escapes. The fall of angles thus signifies: the ideal world, the disappearance of divine force, the sudden appearance of the ordinary, the human.

<sup>16</sup>Cocteau, *Le secret professionnel*, p. 39. Translation by the authors,

Dispassion, selfishness, tenderness, compassion, cruelty, endurance of human contact, purity in debauchery, a blend of relish and scorn for earthly pleasures, an ingenuous amorality, do not delude yourselves: these are the marks of what we call the angelic nature, which every real poet possesses, whether he writes, paints, sculpts, or sings.

<sup>17</sup>Cocteau, *Le secret professionnel*, pp. 40-1. Translation by the authors,

The other world drowns some and cuts the legs off others. Illness, murder, opium, love, it will use anything to finish this quickly and to take back its lost children.

<sup>18</sup>Jean Cocteau, *Two Screenplays: The Blood of a Poet, The Testament of Orpheus*, translated by Carol Martin-Sperry (New York, 1961), p. 134.

<sup>19</sup>Crosland, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup>In a photograph by Serge Lido, done about 1938, an impeccably dressed Cocteau holding a crystal ball studies the disembodied hands of three men. See Chanel, *Album Cocteau*, p. 127. The photograph itself commands attention as a characteristic device of Cocteau's, posed, suggestive, impermeable, and is of interest to this study for the drawing on the wall behind Cocteau. A fluidly executed profile of a young man is iden-

tifiable as a faun by his oversized, pointed ears. The profile is remarkably like that of the poet figure in *La peur donnant des ailes au courage*, the resemblance intensified by the leaf or vine protruding from the faun's mouth.

<sup>21</sup>*Grand Larousse de la langue française* (Paris, 1971) and *Trésor de la langue française* (Paris, 1973). The authors thank Frances Clymer and Lucile Couplan-Cashman for their help in interpreting the title.

<sup>22</sup>Illustrated in Roger Lannes, *Jean Cocteau (Poètes d'aujourd'hui series, 1945 and 1968)*, p. 45, where it is misidentified as a drawing for *Maison de Santé*, published in 1926. The confusion arises, no doubt, from Cocteau's having written *Maison de Santé* on the drawing, Cocteau's whereabouts at the time rather than a reference to the album of drawings by that name. The drawings for *Opium* were done in a clinic near Saint-Cloud in 1928.

<sup>23</sup>Cocteau, *Opium*, p. 19. Translated by Crosland, pp. 415-6,

I leave to the drawings the task of expressing the tortures inflicted by medical impotence on those who drive out a remedy which is in the process of becoming a despot.

<sup>24</sup>Translation by Samuel Beckett,

The time has come to do no longer what I do do, the time has come to go on doing what I do do, the time has come never again to do what I have done and undone . . . Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a mad thing to exhibit oneself in vain.



## John Mix Stanley, A “Hudson River” Painter in Arizona

by James Ballinger

Firebox No. 53 sounded its alarm on the crisp, clear afternoon of Tuesday, January 24, 1865, beckoning fire wagons to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. By the time of their arrival, a newspaperman for the *Daily National Intelligencer* informs us, “the fire mounted the main tower and burst forth from the roof, the sight was magnificently grand; the red flame bursting from all the windows, mounting high to clutch the anemometer, which despite the fire-fiend raging below, faithfully indicated the velocity of the wind.”<sup>1</sup> When the conflagration was finally controlled and extinguished, the upper floor’s main section of this unique structure was a total loss, as were the hopes of John Mix Stanley (1814-1872), a painter whose “Indian Gallery” was loaned to the institution with the goal of Congress making an appropriation for the purchase of the collection which numbered one hundred fifty-two paintings. The painter’s efforts were the result of seven years’ travel in the western reaches of the young Republic, which included his experiences as the first American painter in, what is today, the state of Arizona. The collection, which depicted individuals and scenes of America’s rapidly vanishing native inhabitants, had been deposited with the Smithsonian Institution almost thirteen years earlier, and its purchase had been continually debated throughout those years. Flames con-

sumed all but five of Stanley’s works, losing his gallery to the nation, and, most likely, his reputation to the history of American art. His talent certainly surpassed that of his colleague, George Catlin (1796-1872), who had earlier traveled the northern plains and was likewise attempting to sell his resultant works to the national government. Stanley must have been viewed on a par with the other great Indian painter, Charles Bird King (1785-1862), because the majority of King’s one hundred forty-seven works (actually purchased in 1858) were also lost to the fire but go unmentioned in news reports. Catlin’s numerous works may today be viewed in the galleries of the National Collection of Fine Arts and the National Gallery, but it remains the task of the researcher or museum curator to bring together the works of King and Stanley.

King had been trained at the Royal Academy in London as a student of Benjamin West (1738-1820). Returning to the United States, he finally settled in Washington, D.C. during 1819, and, from 1821 to 1842, he painted the important members of Indian delegations traveling to the capital. King’s academic approach to his Indian gallery was the complete opposite of Stanley’s, whose earliest efforts were also in portraiture but who is now remembered for his landscape and genre paintings of America’s western wilderness in Oklahoma Territory,

New Mexico Territory, and Oregon Territory, beginning in 1842. The tutelage of James Bowman, an itinerate portrait painter with whom Stanley worked in Detroit during the early 1840s, nurtured his career, but it was Stanley's natural talents and pure desire which eventually left their mark. His abilities increased with maturity, as can be demonstrated in a selection of representative works from his *oeuvre*, with resultant paintings proving him to be a successful delineator of America's western Indian tribes. The common label of "explorer-artist," continually placed on Stanley and many artists sharing his sensibilities, is unfair when he is viewed with his contemporaries and not apart as an "illustrator" of government documents. It is the premise of this essay to document this point through examination of the artist's works created during and as a result of his early travels in Arizona and to position Stanley as a mature landscapist with his peers at mid-century.

Stanley painted his first Indian subjects at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, during 1839 and did not return to the West until 1842 when he traveled to Arkansas Territory and New Mexico Territory during the summer and fall. No doubt his initial travels along the Santa Fe Trail encouraged him to make a lengthier sojourn in 1846 and 1847, touring from Fort Leavenworth, Missouri, to San Diego, California. This trek, in the employ of General Stephen Watts Kearny's Army of the West, provided numerous subjects for the artist's projected Indian Gallery in addition to his commissioner status as expedition draughtsman. Stanley's official duties were typical of an expedition artist, the first of whom began accompanying government surveys in 1819 when two young Philadelphians, Titian Ramsey Peale (1799-1885) and Samuel

Seymour (active 1795 to 1823), explored along the Platte River into Wyoming Territory with the Stephen Long expedition. These artists' duties were "collecting specimens suitable to be preserved, in drafting and delineating them, in preserving the skins, &c. of animals, and in sketching the stratification of rocks, earths, &c. presented on the declivities of precipices."<sup>2</sup> In addition, Seymour, the chief artist, was to "furnish sketches of landscapes, wherever we meet any distinguished for their beauty and grandeur. He will also paint miniature likenesses, or portraits if required, of distinguished Indians, and exhibit groups of savages engaged in celebrating their festivals, or sitting in council, and in general to illustrate any subject that may be deemed appropriate in his art."<sup>3</sup> A quarter of a century later, an expedition artist's arduous task could not be better defined. Turning the leaves of Lt. William Emory's published report of Kearny's expedition, *Notes of a Military Reconnoissance from Fort Leavenworth, in Missouri, to San Diego, in California, Including Parts of the Arkansas, Del Norte, and Gila Rivers (Washington, 1848)*, the reader sees lithographs of the Pima and Maricopa Indians, landscapes of New Mexico Territory (including churches and ruins), and illustrations of the flora encountered on the trip. The great majority of these lithographs may be attributed to Stanley. Even though the artists' works were intended for lithographic reproduction in the official survey reports, one would be in error to utilize the term, "illustrator," when discussing most of these painters' works. Rather, this teamwork of art and science occurs at a point in American art history when painters were encouraged to carefully scrutinize nature in all her aspects and to create works of a location's repre-





Fig. 1. John Mix Stanley, *View of Mount Grabam*, 1846, oil on board. Collection of Mrs. Dean Acheson.

sentative spirit. Remember, Stanley is traversing what is today New Mexico and Arizona, only two years prior to the death of Thomas Cole (1801-1848) whose influence established the style of what is termed the Hudson River School. Only fourteen original works created by Stanley on his trip with Emory and Kearny are extant, but examination of these paintings and later works based on Arizona experiences prove Stanley should be placed with his colleagues of the Hudson River style (fig. 1, *View of Mount Grabam*, November 2, 1846, collection Mrs. Dean Acheson).

Many writers, over a long period of

years, have discussed the style, technique and merits of the Hudson River painters. Their willingness to escape the studio to sketch *en plein air* is well documented, as is their formulated approach to composition; that is, a detailed foreground, utilization of atmospheric perspective, and oftentimes a road or stream meandering into the distance to solidify a feeling of actual space. These painters ventured long distances for their sketches which were transformed into final statements in their studios. Barbara Novak, in her discussion of Cole's career, has convincingly stated the chief problem this process created, titling her

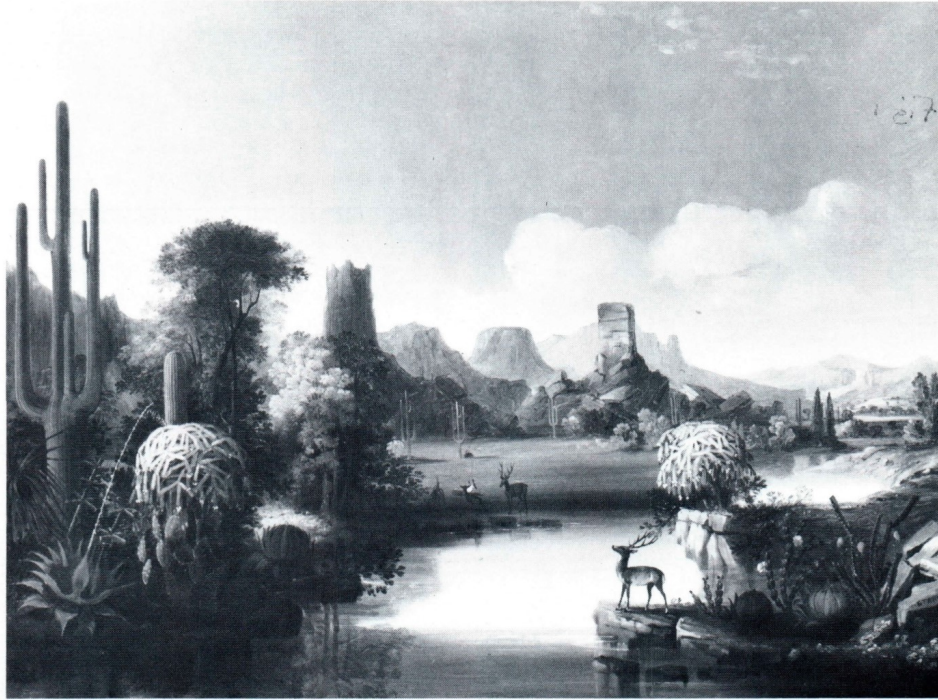


Fig. 2. John Mix Stanley, *Chain of Spires Along the Gila*, 1855, oil on canvas, (78.7x106.7 cm). Accession number 68/20. Collection of the Phoenix Art Museum.

chapter “The Dilemma of the Real and the Ideal.”<sup>4</sup> A painter such as Cole, or the scores of landscape painters active in America during the middle years of the nineteenth century, made imitative sketches of nature and then idealized the scene at the studio easel. Cole stated that “by looking intently on an object for twenty minutes I can go to my room and paint it with much more truth than I could if I employed several hours on the spot.”<sup>5</sup> Further, it was perfectly acceptable for a painter to utilize earlier sketchbook notations allowing “time to draw a veil over the common details, the unessential parts which shall leave the great features, whether the beautiful or the sublime, dominant in the mind.”<sup>6</sup> This

method is precisely Stanley’s approach when one compares the later easel work, *Chain of Spires Along the Gila* (1855, fig. 2, collection Phoenix Art Museum), to his earlier oil sketches and lithographs made in the manner of his original sketches. Unfortunately, no pair (a sketch and finished painting) exists for a direct comparison, but we can conjure up the appearance of the original sketch for *Chain of Spires Along the Gila* from the published lithograph titled *Chain of Natural Spires Along the Gila* (fig. 3) and the other oil sketches, such as *View of Mount Graham*, *View of the Copper Mine* (October 18, 1846, collection Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas), and *The Hieroglyphic Rock of the Gila* (October



22, 1846, collection of Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas). All of these works provide foreground detail of trees, figures, or army encampments, with the space closed off so that the artist is able to report in detail the exact scene encountered. Granted, Stanley's duty was to document what he saw, withholding expression when possible, but even easel pictures painted in San Francisco immediately following his adventure have like attention given to detail (see *Black Knife*, 1846, collection National Gallery of Art). Thus, Stanley's work of 1846 and immediately following can be said to lean heavily to the real side of Novak's "dilemma." The artist's faithfulness can be further established by consulting Emory's published journal for which the sketches were made. His entry for November 8, 1846, reads:

About two miles from camp, our course was traversed by a seam of yellowish colored igneous rock, shooting up into irregular spires and turrets, one or two thousand feet in height. It ran at right angles to the river, and extended to the north, and to the south, in a chain of mountains as far as the eye could reach. One of these towers was capped with a substance, many hundred feet thick, disposed in horizontal strata of different colors, from deep red to light yellow. Partially disintegrated, and laying at the foot of the chain of spires, was a yellowish calcareous sandstone, altered by fire, in large amorphous masses.

For a better description of this landscape, see the sketch by Mr. Stanley [sic].<sup>7</sup>

Emory's lavish attention to this scene and Stanley's oil sketch add weight to the artist's decision to recreate this scene, somewhat altered, nine years later in his Washington, D.C. studio.<sup>8</sup>

It is impossible to know what went through Stanley's mind when he decided to paint *Chain of Spires Along the Gila* in 1855, but one can almost reconstruct the materials on which he had to draw, as well as the prevalent attitude toward America's landscape at that time. This nine-year hiatus placed Stanley, not in the field with troops of the Mexican War, but comfortably in his studio seated next to an easel. He was a much more experienced painter, having painted in Hawaii, Oregon, New York, and then in Washington, where the previous year he had executed and exhibited a panorama of western America (presumably destroyed). It is almost the identical span of years that Henry David Thoreau utilized for *Walden*, first moving to the tranquil pond in 1846 and, finally, publishing the volume in 1854. In addition, if one consults the exhibition record of the National Academy of Design, he or she will discover the middle years of the century were the apogee of landscape painting in this country. During the same year Stanley is at work on *Chain of Spires Along the Gila*, Frederick E. Church (1826-1900) is painting the first of his great South American canvases, *The Cordilleras* (collection Mrs. Dudley Parker), and George Inness (1825-1894) is commissioned to paint *Lackawanna Valley* (collection National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), perhaps the greatest painting of his early years. Finally, it was at approximately the same moment that Asher B. Durand, successor to Cole as America's foremost landscapist, is publishing his widely read "Letters on Landscape" beginning in the premier volume of *The Crayon*, a journal dedicated to the arts in the United States. A passage from his first letter, published January 3, 1855, could be read almost as an invitation to Stanley and his career to this point,

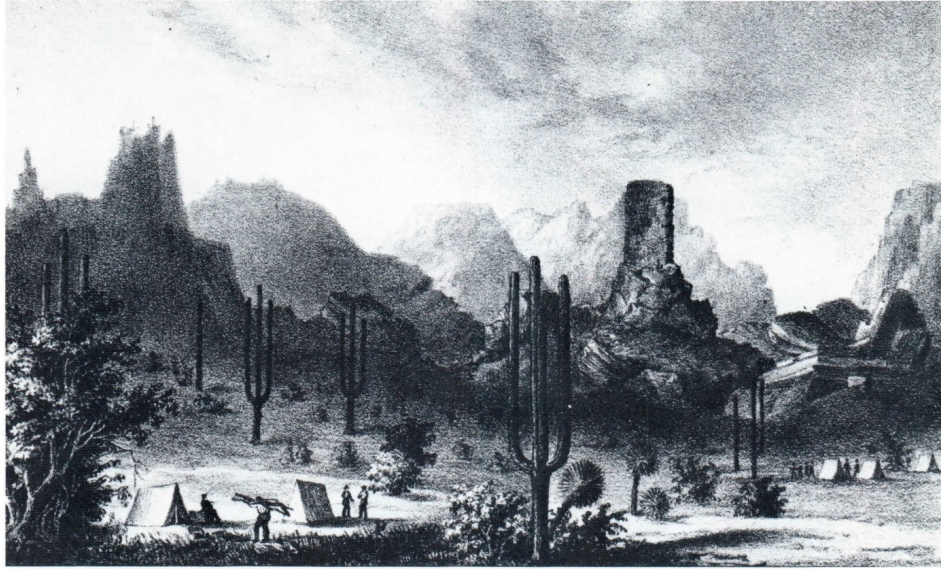


Fig. 3. E. Weber and Company, Lithographers (after John Mix Stanley), *Chain of Natural Spires Along the Gila*, 1848, Lithograph, (10.5x17.4 cm).

You need not a period of pupilage in an artist's studio to learn to paint; books and the casual intercourse with artists, accessible to every respectable young student, will furnish you with all the essential mechanism of the art . . . study in . . . the Studio of Nature."<sup>9</sup>

Stanley's "pupilage" over the past fifteen years had readied him to produce a work of excellence like *Chain of Spires Along the Gila*.

Comparison of Stanley's painting to his earlier published lithograph crystallizes the dilemma of the real versus the ideal. The progression of Durand's "Letters," published intermittently through June 6, 1855, provides practically a scenario for Stanley's development. Letter number II encourages the painter to study nature early, because the world's external appearance "is fraught with lessons of high and holy meaning, only surpassed by the light of Revelation."<sup>10</sup>

Durand lectures that the proper approach to a landscape is to place detail in the foreground and next approach atmosphere through darks (Letter V) and then administer the lighter tones (Letter VI). Atmosphere, Durand states, should be "*felt* in the foreground," "*seen* beyond that," and "*palpable* in the distance."<sup>11</sup> These terms can be applied directly to Stanley's painting of 1855, which carefully displays the many cacti of Arizona in the foreground along the banks of the Gila River which meanders for miles into the far distance of the scene.

The painter did not merely recreate his earlier sketch either. Major changes may be noted. The tents of the encampment have been removed from the foreground which is greatly expanded to include even greater detail of the desert flora and fauna that the artist recalled from his earlier adventure. His attention



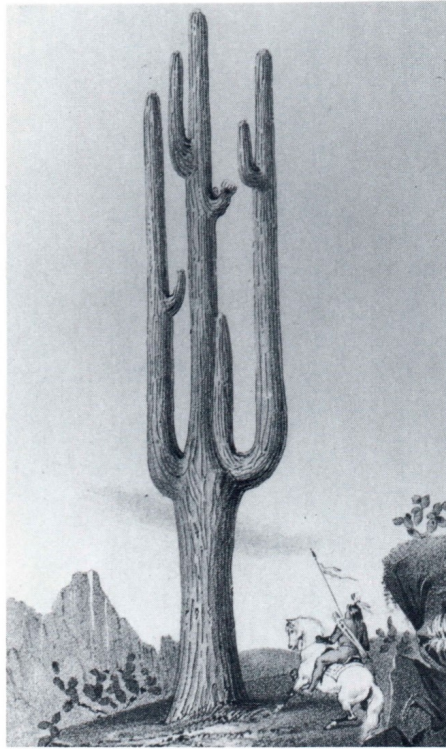


Fig. 4. Graham and Company, Lithographers (after John Mix Stanley), *Cereus Giganteus*, 1848, Lithograph, (17.3x10.4 cm).

to detail is so precise that he has directly copied the saguaro cactus (*Cereus Giganteus*) from the published lithograph of the same subject made nine years earlier (fig. 4). Likewise, the chollas standing as entrance gates to the scene are copied from another such lithograph in Emory's published report (page 76). Perhaps the greatest shift in approach is the painter's willingness to turn the stereotyped "great American desert" into a "garden of Eden" by utilizing golden light and a purely tranquil approach to the river and its bordering verdure. In fact, juxtaposition of these

two works magnifies Stanley's mythologizing the symbol of the West to what Henry Nash Smith has termed the "Garden of the World" in his superb study, *Virgin Land*, first published in 1949. Smith explores the development of this myth from the late eighteenth century through the middle years of the nineteenth century following Alexis de Tocqueville's visit to America and his publication of *Democracy in America*. De Tocqueville felt that Americans valued their wilderness for what they could make of it, transforming raw nature into a rural, pastoral environment of peace and happiness. Smith states, "The master symbol of the garden embraced a cluster of metaphors expressing fecundity, growth, increase, and blissful labor in the earth."<sup>12</sup> This philosophy, so well depicted by the painter is in total opposition to the feelings expressed by others on the original trek through Arizona in their journals. Emory continually wrote of the unknown. Another recorder, Henry Smith Turner, could complain just six days prior to experiencing the chain of spires:

I constantly feel as though I were in a dream, to be thus surrounded day after day with a wilderness, not one familiar object in nature except the sun, the moon and the stars—all else is wild and strange to me . . . I wish from the bottom of my heart I had seen the end of this toilsome march.<sup>13</sup>

Turner's interpretation of the march to San Diego was not a scientist's as was Emory's; thus his entry for November 8, the date of Stanley's original sketch for the chain of spires, speaks of the site being "the only grass said to be on the route for many miles—here we are for the night, a most sad, gloomy looking place it is; in any other country it would be distinguished as being destitute of

grass."<sup>14</sup> A third chronicler, Captain A. R. Johnston, discussed the geologic interest of the area that clear day following the previous night's showers and added that the campsite was "the last grass on the road from this to California. They tell us there is none; this is very scant, and could not well be worse."<sup>15</sup> The artist's deviation from the diarist's is easily explained by the artistic process of idealization of the subject with the goal being a presentation of what Durand called "truth" in Nature. Stanley's attempt is somewhat exaggerated, but he held the advantage that few viewers would ever know the difference!

Durand's final "Letter on Landscape," published in *The Crayon* of June 6, 1855, examined "the conventional distinctions of Idealism and Realism, together with the action of the imagination with them."<sup>16</sup> Keeping in mind Stanley's composition of the same year, the reader may approach Durand's question, "What is Idealism?" His description of an ideal work is "that picture . . . whose component parts are representative of the utmost perfection of Nature, whether with respect to beauty or other considerations of fitness in the objects represented."<sup>17</sup> Realism, on the other hand, "must consist in the acceptance of ordinary forms and combinations as found . . . the term Realism signifies little else than a disciplinary stage of Idealism."<sup>18</sup> Durand's thesis strikes to the very heart of Stanley's growth in landscape subjects, from a factual painter in 1846 to a Hudson River disciple in 1855, and can be demonstrated in no better way than in his two versions of *Chain of Spires Along the Gila*.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>*Daily National Intelligencer*, January 25, 1865, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Jessie Poesch, *Titian Ramsay Peale 1799-1885 and His Journal of the Wilkes Expedition* (Philadelphia, 1961), p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>Barbara Novak, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism and the American Experience* (New York, 1969), p. 61.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Novak, *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup>William Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnoissance from Fort Leavenworth, in Missouri, to San Diego, in California, Including Parts of the Arkansas, Del Norte, and Gila Rivers* (Washington, 1848), p. 79.

<sup>8</sup>In addition, upon receipt of Stanley's Indian Gallery at the Smithsonian Institution in 1852, the *Daily National Intelligencer* of February 23 singles out four paintings from the total collection, two of which were Arizona subjects. Special attention was paid *View on the Gila* (1851, destroyed) as "that ravishing view on the Gila, disclosing an order of the vegetable kingdom and a style of geology as different from what prevail in our region of the continent as if they were the belongings to some other planet."

<sup>9</sup>Asher B. Durand, "Letters on Landscape," Number I, *The Crayon*, January 3, 1855 (reprinted New York, 1970), pp. 1 and 2.



<sup>10</sup>Asher B. Durand, "Letters on Landscape," Number II, *The Crayon*, January 17, 1855 (reprinted New York, 1970), p. 34.

<sup>11</sup>Asher B. Durand, "Letters on Landscape," Number V, *The Crayon*, March 7, 1855 (reprinted New York, 1970), p. 186.

<sup>12</sup>Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (New York, 1950), p. 138.

<sup>13</sup>Henry Smith Turner, *The Original Journals of Henry Smith Turner with Stephen Watts Kearny to New Mexico and California*, 1846, edited by Dwight L. Clarke (Norman, 1966), pp. 100 and 101.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>15</sup>A. R. Johnston's Journal was published as an appendix to Emory, *op. cit.*, p. 594.

<sup>16</sup>Asher B. Durand, "Letters on Landscape," Number VIII, *The Crayon*, June 6, 1855 (New York, 1970), p. 354. Oddly, Novak does not discuss Durand's definition of idealism and realism in her examination of the topics.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 354.

## *Corn Husking* by Winslow Homer

by Gerald Eager



Fig. 1. Winslow Homer, *Corn Husking*, 1878, oil on canvas. Oliver B. James Collection of American Art, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

There are occasional years when, after spring has leafed and blossomed, a long series of storms and rains destroys one's sense of summer. Suddenly one raises one's eyes to the trees and discovers that autumn has arrived . . . The Civil War shook down the blossoms and blasted the promise of spring. The colours of American civilization abruptly changed. By the time

the war was over, browns had spread everywhere . . . Autumn had come.

Lewis Mumford  
*The Brown Decades*

The seasonal subject matter represented by Winslow Homer (1836-1910) in *Corn Husking*, 1878, from the Arizona State University Collection of American Art (Figure 1), is seen in several other





Fig. 2. Winslow Homer, "Husking Party Finding the Red Ears," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, November 28, 1857.

works by Homer. Surveying this subject as it is treated by Homer from its first appearance in 1857 to *Corn Husking* is to follow the strides taken by Homer from young illustrator to mature artist, and to sample the change in the spirit of American art from the pre- to the post-Civil War period.

Winslow Homer's career began with the illustrations for the wood engravings that appeared in *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, a Boston weekly illustrated magazine. Among the first work done by Homer for *Ballou's Pictorial* was a series which appeared in the November 28, 1857 issue that represented four popular late autumn and early winter entertainments — children playing blindman's buff and sleigh riding, and young adults at a husking party

and playing fox and geese. One illustration from this series, *Husking Party Finding the Red Ears* (Figure 2), relates to the painting in the Arizona State University Collection in the choice of the corn husking subject matter. The early illustration emphasizes an amusing aspect of the subject, showing young men who search for and discover the red ears of corn for which they are rewarded (sometimes) by the young ladies with a kiss.

While employed by *Ballou's Pictorial*, Homer did free lance work for the New York illustrated magazine, *Harper's Weekly*. Homer illustrated the corn husking party theme for *Harper's Weekly* in *Husking the Corn in New England* (Figure 3) which appeared in the November 13, 1858 issue as one of a series of three



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Corn Husking by Winslow Homer

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Fig. 3. Winslow Homer, "Husking the Corn in New England," *Harper's Weekly*, November 13, 1858.

illustrations all dealing with the late autumn subject of corn husking—bringing home the corn to be husked, the husking party, and a dance after the husking. *Husking the Corn in New England* has twice as many figures as *Husking Party* *Finding the Red Ears*, and the assortment of anecdotes surrounding the finding of the red ears is not only richer in variety, but also is easier to read because the figures are represented more convincingly and the composition is organized more skillfully.

A second illustration from this series, *Driving Home the Corn* (Figure 4), also places emphasis on amusing anecdote—the little dog peering expectantly into the hollow of the tree stump—and on light hearted romance—the young ladies demurely glancing at the man car-

rying an armload of corn stalks. However, the sense of leisure time entertainment in this illustration is subdued a bit by the field hands at work loading a wagon in the background, and the ox cart hauling the corn stalks in the foreground. In the cart, atop the corn stalks is seated a youthful male figure who, in his profile pose and his connection with the routine chores and not just the pleasant pastimes of the harvest, brings to mind the appearance and activity of the figure in *Corn Husking*.

The seasonal subject of corn husking was illustrated by Homer once again in *The Last Days of Harvest* which appeared in the December 6, 1873 issue of *Harper's Weekly* (Figure 5). When *Ballou's Pictorial* ceased publishing as an illustrated magazine in 1859, Homer moved





Fig. 4. Winslow Homer, "Driving Home the Corn," *Harper's Weekly*, November 13, 1858.

to New York and continued to do illustrations for the wood engravings in *Harper's Weekly* until 1874. During this time, Homer began painting, taking up oils in 1861 and watercolor in 1873, and many of Homer's illustrations for *Harper's Weekly* are closely related to his paintings of the period. It seems likely that an important factor contributing to the growth of Homer's art was the exchange of ideas in both imagery and execution that took place between illustration and painting. In any event, the frequent interrelationship of illustration and painting in Homer's work is exemplified by the dependence of Arizona State's *Corn Husking* on *The Last Days of Harvest*.

*The Last Days of Harvest* is not an assemblage of separate anecdotes that the viewer reads, as were Homer's ear-

lier illustrations, but a single experience that the viewer shares. The theme of entertainment and the mood of romance that were uppermost in *Driving Home the Corn* are absent from *The Last Days of Harvest*, and the routine tasks of farm life that existed at the edges and in the background of *Driving Home the Corn* are brought front and center. The men pitching pumpkins into a wagon in the middle of the scene and the boys husking corn in the foreground appear as unselfconsciously accepting of the job at hand as are the horses hitched to the wagon—and seemingly are no more thinking of husking parties or finding red ears than are the pumpkins in the field.

Homer has selected the figure of the boy at the right in *The Last Days of Har-*





Fig. 5. Winslow Homer, "The Last Days of Harvest," *Harper's Weekly*, December 6, 1873.

vest to be the focus of *Corn Husking*, moving him to the center of the composition and stabilizing his position by placing two pyramidal stacks of corn behind him. The landscape, however, is equally the center of attention in *Corn Husking*, from the corn shucks and the stubble of the corn stalks in the foreground, through the field of pumpkins, to the row of trees behind the fence and the overcast sky in the background. The compositional structure of *Corn Husking*, which locks the figure in the landscape, and the thematic concept of this painting, which links the activity of the figure to the forces of nature, are ideas which will occupy Homer in his major works in the decades to come.

In composition and concept, as well as in the liquid look of the painted surface,

*Corn Husking* is closely related to Homer's watercolor of the same year, *The Pumpkin Patch—Harvest Scene* (Figure 6). In the right center of this work a group of boys, encircled by three stacks of corn stalks, shuck corn. Another boy in the left center, bracketed by two stacks of corn stalks, carries a large pumpkin through the stumps of corn stalks toward the right. This boy carrying the pumpkin brings to mind the man gathering pumpkins in a field of harvested corn in Homer's illustration for the August issue of *Scribner's Monthly*, *Pumpkins Among the Corn*, also of 1878 (Figure 7). And often the children in Homer's illustrations and paintings of the 1870's are shown engaged in light chores or pastimes that forecast the occupations of the adults represented in Homer's later





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*Corn Husking* by Winslow Homer

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work. Picking berries, gathering nuts, hunting for eggs, fishing for suckers, digging clams—and husking corn—are preparation for the tasks which children will be responsible for as the fishermen (and fishermen's wives), the huntsmen, lumbermen—and the farmers that the children will grow up to become.

Winslow Homer's first entertaining representation of the autumn corn husking subject, *Husking Party Finding the Red Ears*, depicts young adults frolicking like the children playing blindman's buff or sleigh riding in the companion works from this early series of illustrations. Homer's *Corn Husking* describes a boy, poised near the edge of manhood, working like a grownup in an autumn landscape that marks the end of summertime and suggests the winter to come. It fixes for somber reflection an instant in the swift passage of childhood and a moment in the inexorable course of the seasons.



Fig. 6. Winslow Homer, *The Pumpkin Patch—Harvest Scene*, 1878. Collection of the Canajoharie Library and Art Gallery.

Fig. 7. Winslow Homer, "Pumpkins Among the Corn," *Scribner's Monthly*, August, 1878.



## A Plate from the Meissen Swan Service in the Phoenix Art Museum

by Barbara Nachtigall

Recently, the Phoenix Art Museum acquired a plate<sup>1</sup> made at the Royal Porcelain Manufactory at Meissen in the late 1730's as part of an armorial service for Heinrich, Graf von Brühl, the factory's director.<sup>2</sup> This plate is the work of Johann Joachim Kändler, chief modeler at the Meissen factory, and the service of which it is a part is without doubt the crowning achievement of porcelain tableware with molded decoration.

The plate's underlying shape is that of a shell, suggested by the scalloped rim and the ground of twisting fluting. The sunken center panel is molded in shallow relief displaying two swans swimming against a background of water grasses and rushes. To the left of the swans, a crane or heron hides behind a clump of rushes while another flies overhead. A pair of shells floats on the water near the base of the relief, and the head of a fish breaks through the waves beneath the swan on the right.

A limited palette of rich enamel colors and gilt has been used sparingly, but to great effect. The painted decoration is confined to the border of the plate and consists of the arms of von Brühl impaling those of his wife, Gräfin von Kollowrat-Krakowski, and small sprays of *indianische Blumen*.<sup>3</sup> The scalloped rim has been traced with delicate gold edging.

The museum's plate was originally conceived as a single element in a larger entity, the spectacular Swan Service, cre-

ated at the Royal Meissen factory between 1737 and 1741. The service acquired its name in the nineteenth century, inspired no doubt by the swan motif which prevails throughout. Though the swan is the most prominent motif, the molded decoration of the service is unified by a theme of flora, fauna, and mythology of water, and within this unifying theme there is a great variety of forms, including dolphins, river gods, nymphs, sirens, nereids, shells, masks and scrolls. Water was a fashionable theme in these early days of the Rococo, and the overall aquatic theme of the service is a reference to the name Brühl, which means "marshy place." The marsh scene on the Phoenix plate is derived from an engraving in a travel book published by Leonhard Buggels in Nuremberg in 1700.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most distinctive features of the Swan Service was its size. It was a dinner, tea, coffee, and chocolate service for one hundred people and comprised at least 2,200 individual items. Production of the Swan Service took place during the early stages of the Rococo age, at which time the use of a table service with a harmonious design reached its peak. The well-laid table stood then in its full glory as a single composition, a work of art in which each individual element played its part.<sup>5</sup>

The Swan Service is probably the single most important work produced at

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A Meissen Plate

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Fig. 1. *Plate, Swan Service*, German, Meissen, c. 1738, hard paste porcelain. Accession number 79/141. Collection of the Phoenix Art Museum.

the Meissen porcelain factory, and the Phoenix plate which belongs to it is one of the finest objects produced by Johann Joachim Kändler. The molded relief which covers the entire surface of the plate and the restrained use of painted decoration were radical departures from the previous handling of such surfaces at

Meissen. Up to that time, painted designs had been the most prominent feature of surface decoration, while modeling had been used infrequently, if at all.

The Swan Service marks the ultimate triumph of the *Modelmeister*, Kändler, over Johann Gregor Höroldt, the director of the painters. No longer would the





Fig. 2. *Plate, Swan Service, (back).*

modelers simply be expected to provide a flat surface on which the painters could display their skills. The modeled surface now had decorative qualities all its own, forcing the painted decoration into a secondary role.

The painted decoration, as exemplified by the Phoenix plate, is completely subordinate to the modeling. White accented by gold, a prevalent feature of Rococo interior decoration, is echoed in the meticulous application of the gilding

to the pure white surface of the body. Enamel colors used with great restraint further enhance the lustrous translucent surface of the porcelain.

Trained as a sculptor, Kändler was also able to assimilate features from the work of contemporary French and German silversmiths.<sup>6</sup> In so doing, he was the first to recognize the wide range of possibilities available, and he created a completely new vocabulary for porcelain. For the first time a molded relief covers

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## A Meissen Plate

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the entire surface of the plate so that the plasticity and whiteness of the paste, as well as the brilliance of the glaze, are exploited to their utmost. With the modeled design of the plates of the Swan Service, as typified by the Phoenix plate, Kändler has liberated porcelain tableware from the domination of the oriental patterns popular in the early Meissen services, as well as from its almost total reliance on painted decoration.

Kändler worked on the Swan Service for four years, from 1737 to 1741, and at no time in his career was he ever so totally involved in a project, down to the smallest details. Those pieces which he did not actually create, he thoroughly supervised in development and production.<sup>7</sup> He also supervised the painted decoration himself, considering it an integral part of the entire conception.

The Swan Service not only marks the turning point in the ascendancy of modeled over painted decoration, as mentioned above, but also marks the beginning of the production of porcelain wares in the Rococo style, a style which prevailed at Meissen for most of the eighteenth century. Though this monumental project was extremely costly, it undoubtedly stimulated the artistic vitality of the factory and inspired many new ideas which made Meissen the leading porcelain factory in Europe until the outbreak of the Seven Years War (1756-1763). Further, this undertaking established Kändler as the predominant figure at Meissen, until his death in 1775.

Of the original two thousand plus pieces of the Swan Service, at least 1400 are believed to be still extant. In the United States alone, there are examples of Swan Service pieces at the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Toledo Museum of Art, and the Los Angeles

County Museum of Art. The Phoenix Art Museum is indeed fortunate to possess one of the most elegant pieces of this magnificent service.





## Notes

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Donald Rabiner, under whose guidance the paper from which this article was drawn was written.

<sup>1</sup>Purchased from Christie's New York, on 30 November 1979; one of two dinner plates formerly in the collection of Mrs. John W. Christner of Dallas, Texas.

<sup>2</sup>Immediately upon the death of Augustus the Strong in 1733, von Brühl began to oversee the Meissen factory and remained its director until his own death in 1763.

<sup>3</sup>*Indianische Blumen* are the formalized, oriental flowers, derived from the Japanese Kakiemon-style decoration, which were used at the Meissen factory until about 1740. See: George Savage, *18th Century German Porcelain* (New York, 1958), pp. 69-71.

<sup>4</sup>George Savage and Harold Newman, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Ceramics* (New York, 1974), p. 280.

<sup>5</sup>Carl Hernmarck, *The Art of the European Silversmith 1430-1830* (London, 1977), p. 178.

<sup>6</sup>William B. Honey, *Dresden China* (New York, 1946), p. 99.

<sup>7</sup>Otto Walcha, *Meissner Porzellan* (Dresden, 1973), pp. 107-108.